

DETROIT — BEFORE THE MOTOR CAR

Note to teachers: This supplement includes a discussion guide, lessons and Michigan Content Standards to use with the Michigan Time Traveler page. You may reproduce the pages in this supplement to use with students.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

- **Water Travel:** Describe the pirogue (rhymes with “sea rogue”), the bark canoe and the schooner. Which one would you choose for a trip from Detroit to Buffalo, NY, or from Detroit to Mackinac Island in 1864? Why? (*SOC 1.3. Analyze and Interpret the Past*)
- **French Carts:** In what ways were French carts a useful vehicle? (used for visits, trips to church, hauling water) Find the meaning of the word “linchpin” in the dictionary. Why was the linchpin important? What do we mean today when we say that someone or something is a “linchpin?” (*SOC 1.3. Analyze and Interpret the Past; ELA 3. Meaning and Communication in Context*)
- **Streetcars:** What two types of power were used to pull streetcars in Detroit’s early history? (horses, electrical power) What was the benefit of putting the streetcars on rails like a train, even though they were still pulled by horses? (smoother ride, horses could pull heavier loads) (*SOC 1.3. Analyze and Interpret the Past*)
- **Some Dates In Early Detroit Transportation History:** Until the 1900s there were few good roads in Detroit or Michigan. How did that affect the growth of transportation? (attention to road building, use of planks for roads, development of streetcars and railroads) (*SOC 1.3. Analyze and Interpret the Past; SOC.1.1. Time and Chronology*)

ACTIVITY ONE: From Canoes to Cars—Make Detroit’s Transportation Time Line

(*SOC.1.1. Time and Chronology; SOC 1.3. Analyze and Interpret the Past; Arts 2. Visual Arts: Creating*)

Post each date on the Michigan Time Traveler page on a posters or card and hang around the classroom. Extend the time line by making a card/poster for each date below. Shape the cards like a transportation vehicle or illustrate the posters with an appropriate vehicle, from canoes to cars. Discuss how people moved about Detroit—and Michigan—during Detroit’s first 200 years. Divide students into groups of 2-3. Assign each group one of the transportation items from the Time Traveler list and the list below. Ask each group to develop 3-5 reasons their item is important in history and present the reasons to the class.

1886	Street railways in Detroit begin to be electrified.
1896	Charles King drives first automobile in Detroit—the two-cylinder car he built.
1900	R. E. Olds builds his first curved dash Oldsmobile in Detroit.
1903	Henry Ford founds the Ford Motor Company.
1905	The Michigan Department of Transportation is created.
1908	William C. Durant starts General Motors.
1920	The first 4-way traffic signal with red, green and amber lights, designed by William L. Potts of the Detroit Police Department, is placed at the intersection of Woodward Avenue and Fort Street in Detroit.
1925	The Chrysler Corporation is formed.
1929	The Ambassador Bridge opens.
1930	Wayne County Airport (now Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport) opens. Detroit-Windsor Tunnel opens.
1942-42	Detroit’s first freeway, the Davison, is built.
1956	Streetcar service in Detroit is discontinued.
1987	The Detroit People Mover begins service.

ACTIVITY TWO: Tour Your Town

(SOC.I.3. Analyze and Interpret the Past; SOC.V.I. Information Processing)

This activity will be a fun way for students to observe things about their town they might not have noticed before—something surveyors, map makers and artists do. The images and maps in the *Frontier Metropolis* exhibit and the memories from the *Michigan Historical and Pioneer Collections* tell us much about early Detroit. Have your students really looked at their own community lately? Introduce this topic by asking them (without looking) to describe the homes or businesses across the street from their school (or another popular place in your town).

Locate a map of your town or work with your students to make a map of the area around your school for a distance of about one mile. Make enough copies of the map so that each group of 4-6 students from your class has one. Mark a walking route on each map from the school to a common destination (park, playground or back to school).

IMPORTANT: Each group's walk should follow different routes, with the groups separating when leaving the school and rejoining at the final destination. Actual distance traveled should be similar for each group. Assign an adult chaperon to each group.

Provide each group with a map, assignment sheet (page 3) and notepaper. Clipboards are also helpful. Set groups out on their tour with a time to meet at the final destination. Students should rotate map reading and note-taking responsibilities. Groups should complete the assignments as they walk, with another 5-10 minutes at the destination to finalize the assignment. Have each group report its findings. Discuss what they discovered about their community that they hadn't realized before this tour. Provide water or juice and other refreshments as a reward for their endeavors!

ACTIVITY THREE: Detroit—Maps of Then and Now

(SOC.I.3. Analyze and Interpret the Past; SOC.II.4. Regions, Patterns and Processes)

Obtain a city map of Detroit or use the "Downtown Detroit" city map on the back of the Michigan Department of Transportation map. Make a copy for each student (enlarging the MDOT inset map 2x). Also provide each student with a copy of the 1830 *Plat of the city of Detroit as laid out by the Govr. and Judges* by John Farmer (page 4).

Call students' attention to the **1830 map**. Locate these landmarks: the Detroit River; Michigan Grand, Woodward and Jefferson Avenues; Grand Circus (empty half circle at top of map); and Military Square (intersection of Woodward and Michigan Grand avenues. Add these other landmarks from the same era: Michigan's Territorial (and first state) Capitol (in Sec. VIII), St. Ann's Church (in Sec. I) and City Hall (in Michigan Grand Avenue below the word "Grand." Ask students to place the modern **Downtown Detroit map** next to the **1830 map**. Have students locate the Detroit River; Grand Circus Park; Michigan (US-12), Woodward and Jefferson avenues; and Kennedy Square. (Project the maps using an overhead projector, if possible.) Help students define the area in the modern **Downtown Detroit map** which matches that of the **1830 map**; outline the area with a marker or highlighter. (roughly, starting at Cass and Adams Ave., east to Randolph, south to the Detroit River, west following Civic Center Dr., north to Larned Street, east to Griswold, north to Kennedy Square, west along Michigan to Cass and north to Adams Ave.) Discuss the ways in which the city has changed and the ways it is similar to that of 1830.

INTERNET RESOURCES

- Detroit Tricentennial 300 Website: <http://www.detroit300.org/>
- Detroit Historical Museum: <http://www.detroithistorical.org/>
- Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village: <http://www.hfmgv.org/>
- "The Carriage Makers," Michigan Historical Museum:
<http://www.sos.state.mi.us/history/museum/explore/museums/hismus/prehist/manufac/carriage.html>
- Michigan's Historic Sites Online: <http://www.sos.state.mi.us/history/preserve/michsite/index.html>
- Michigan Department of Transportation Maps and Publications: <http://www.mdot.state.mi.us/mappub/>

Tour Your Town

Look for moving “creatures.”

Animal: _____

Bird: _____

Largest truck: How many wheels? _____

Oldest car: _____

Count red cars and trucks. How many? _____

Look down

Oldest concrete sidewalk date and maker: _____

First manhole, location: _____

First accessible curb cut _____

Look up

Sketch a fancy piece of a building’s architectural decoration on a separate piece of paper. Name, address of building: _____

First old-fashioned TV antenna seen (address): _____

First video satellite dish seen (address): _____

Listen

Animal, bird or insect you heard: _____

A noise that native peoples or early pioneers would NOT have heard: _____

Locate

A street named for:

A famous person: _____

A woman’s or man’s first name: _____

A plant or animal _____

A place: _____

A tree or other plant with parts that either people or animals can eat: _____

More

Plat of the city of Detroit as laid out by the Govr. and Judges

John Farmer, 1830

State Archives of Michigan

